

## CLAIMS

### What is claimed is:

1. A gaming apparatus, comprising:

a primary game; and

5 a bonus indicator separate from said primary game, said bonus indicator to operate simultaneously with said primary game, to be of approximately the same duration as said primary game, and to indicate whether a player goes on to  
10 a bonus round.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols and wherein said primary game is won when a  
15 predetermined combination of symbols is achieved.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

20 5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

25 6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a

predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said apparatus is connected to an overall casino management system which monitors and controls said apparatus.

8. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said apparatus is linked to one or more other gaming apparatuses to create a bank of hyperlinked gaming apparatuses.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said bonus indicator is used to show participation in a tournament played across a linked group of gaming apparatuses.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9, wherein the outcome of said bonus indicator is substantially independent of the outcome of said primary game.

11. A gaming apparatus, comprising:

a primary game; and

a bonus indicator separate from said primary game, said bonus indicator to operate simultaneously with said primary game, to be of approximately the same duration as said primary game, and to indicate whether a player has won a prize.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said prize is a promotional item or message from a casino.

13. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of

displaying symbols and wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved.

14. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

5 15. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

16. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a  
10 predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

17. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a  
15 predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

18. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said apparatus is connected to an overall casino management system which monitors and controls said apparatus.

20 19. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said apparatus is linked to one or more other gaming apparatuses to create a bank of hyperlinked gaming apparatuses.

20. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said bonus indicator is used to show participation in a tournament played across a linked group of gaming apparatuses.

21. The apparatus of claim 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18,  
5 19, or 20, wherein the outcome of said bonus indicator is substantially independent of the outcome of said primary game.

22. A method for playing a gaming machine that includes a bonus indicator, comprising:

playing a primary game; and

10 automatically initiating a separate bonus indicator, said bonus indicator to operate simultaneously with said primary game, to be of approximately the same duration as said primary game, and to indicate whether a player goes on to  
15 a bonus round.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols and wherein said primary game is won when a  
20 predetermined combination of symbols is achieved.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

25. The method of claim 22, wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

26. The method of claim 22, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a

predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

27. The method of claim 22, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

28. The method of claim 22, wherein said gaming machine is connected to an overall casino management system which monitors and controls said gaming machine.

29. The method of claim 22, wherein said gaming machine is linked to one or more other gaming machines to create a bank of hyperlinked gaming machines.

30. The method of claim 22, wherein said bonus indicator is used to show participation in a tournament played across a linked group of gaming machines.

31. The method of claim 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, or 30, wherein the outcome of said bonus indicator is substantially independent of the outcome of said primary game.

32. A method for playing a gaming machine that includes a bonus indicator, comprising:

playing a primary game; and

automatically initiating a separate bonus indicator, said bonus indicator to operate simultaneously with said primary game, to be of

approximately the same duration as said primary game, and to indicate whether a player has won a prize.

5        33. The method of claim 32, wherein said prize is a promotional item or message from a casino.

      34. The method of claim 32, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols and wherein said primary game is won when a  
10 predetermined combination of symbols is achieved.

      35. The method of claim 32, wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

      36. The method of claim 32, wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

15        37. The method of claim 32, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is a roulette type wheel.

20        38. The method of claim 32, wherein said primary game contains a plurality of reels, each of which is capable of displaying symbols, wherein said primary game is won when a predetermined combination of symbols is achieved, and wherein said bonus indicator is one or more reels.

39. The method of claim 32, wherein said gaming machine is connected to an overall casino management system which monitors and controls said gaming machine.

40. The method of claim 32, wherein said gaming machine is  
5 linked to one or more other gaming machines to create a bank of hyperlinked gaming machines.

41. The method of claim 32, wherein said bonus indicator is used to show participation in a tournament played across a linked group of gaming machines.

10 42. The method of claim 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, or 41, wherein the outcome of said bonus indicator is substantially independent of the outcome of said primary game.

43. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said bonus indicator awards a predetermined prize.

15 44. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said bonus indicator awards a random prize.